

Message Text

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S E C R E T ATHENS 8310

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PLOS, GR, TU, US

SUBJECT: SECURITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF AEGEAN DISPUTE

REF: (A) ATHENS 8246, (B) ANKARA 6135 (NOTAL)N

(C) STATE 198408, (C) ATHENS 8156 (NOTAL)

1. GIVEN THE AMOUNT OF PASSION AROUSED IN GREECE OVER THE OPERATIONS OF THE SISMIL I, THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE INITIATIVE TAKEN BY CARAMANLIS TO BRING GREECE'S AEGEAN DISPUTE WITH TURKEY BEFORE THE SECURITY COUNCIL REPRESENTS A MODERATE REACTION BY THE GREEK GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY IN THE FACE OF ERRATIC AND CHAUVINISTIC PRESSURES BY THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND ITS SUPPORTERS IN THE GREEK PRESS. THE MOVE TO NEW YORK MAY EVEN PROVE TO BE NOT SIMPLY THE LEAST OF POSSIBLE EVILS, BUT CONSTRUCTIVE IF THE DEBATE AND THE RESOLUTION PRODUCED BY IT ARE SKILLFULLY HANDLED. CARAMANLIS

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HIMSELF SEEMS TO BE APPROACHING HIS NEW YORK INITIATIVE

IN THAT SPIRIT (REF.A). THERE SHOULD BE NO REPEAT NO DOUBT, HOWEVER, THAT MUCH WILL BE RIDING ON THE OUTCOME AS FAR AS US-GREEK RELATIONS ARE CONCERNED. THE GREEKS WILL BE TEMPTED -- AND THE GREEK OPPOSITION IRRESISTIBLY SO -- TO REGARD ANY US PRONOUNCEMENTS EXPRESSING LESS THAN ALL-OUT SUPPORT FOR THE GREEK POSITION AS ANOTHER VIRTUAL SELLOUT. 500 YEARS OF GREEK-TURKISH ANIMOSITY AND TWO YEARS OF ALMOST UNRELIEVED GREEK FRUSTRATION ABOUT ITS RELATIONS WITH TURKEY WILL BE CONSTANT IF INVISIBLE FACTORS AFFECTING THE GREEK ATTITUDE AND DISTORTING THE GREEK PERCEPTION OF EVENTS. WE NEED TO BE AWARE OF THESE FACTORS, NOT BECAUSE WE CAN AFFORD TO PERMIT THEM TO SHAPE THE US POSITION. RATHER WE MUST KEEP THEM IN MIND IN ORDER TO MOVE THE DEBATE, TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY, IN DIRECTIONS WHICH WILL LIMIT THEIR ABILITY TO DETERMINE THE OUTCOME.

2. THIS WILL BE HARD BUT BY NO MEANS IMPOSSIBLE TO DO. INDEED THE TERMS IN WHICH THE GREEKS APPEAR TO HAVE FRAMED THEIR APPEAL TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL (REF. C) POINT IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. IF WHAT CARAMANLIS TOLD VAN DER STOEL IS ACCURATE -- AND IT SEEMS TO BE CONFIRMED BY THE TONE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS TO THE AMBASSADOR (REF A)-- THE GREEK GOVERNMENT IS SEEKING A RESOLUTION WHICH DOES TWO THINGS: CALLS ON THE TURKS TO WITHDRAW THE SISMİK FROM DISPUTED AREAS OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF AND ENDORSES THE GREEK DESIRE TO TAKE THE AEGEAN DISPUTE TO THE HAGUE COURT FOLLOWING OR CONCURRENTLY WITH RESUMPTION OF DIRECT DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN ANKARA AND ATHENS. THESE ARE EVIDENTLY MAXIMUM GREEK OBJECTIVES AND CARAMANLIS IS ALMOST CERTAINLY REALISTIC ENOUGH TO KNOW THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO BE WHITTLED DOWN TO PASS THROUGH THE EYE OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S NEEDLE.

3. HOW MUCH HE CAN AFFORD TO REDUCE THEM BEFORE THE RESOLUTION TO BE PASSED BECOMES A POLITICAL LIABILITY RATHER THAN AN ASSET IS DIFFICULT TO ESTIMATE. HE HIMSELF MAY NOT KNOW THIS AS YET AND HIS ESTIMATES OF THE MARGIN OF COMPROMISE AVAILABLE TO THE GREEK GOVERNMENT WILL INEVITABLY BE AFFECTED BY THE COURSE

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OF THE DEBATE AND WHAT IS GOING ON MEANWHILE IN THE AEGEAN. IN THE PAST 24 HOURS WE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS QUESTION INFORMALLY WITH A VARIETY OF INFLUENTIAL GREEKS, INCLUDING COORDINATION MINISTER PAPALIGOURAS, DEPUTY LEADER OF THE CENTER OPPOSITION PESMAZOGLOU AND HELEN VLACHOS, THE EDITOR-PUBLISHER OF DATHEMERINI. WHILE ALL OF THESE OBSERVERS HAVE STARTED OUT BY INSISTING THAT, AT A MINIMUM, THE SECURITY COUNCIL, SPURRED ON

BY THE US, MUST CALL ON THE TURKS TO WITHDRAW THE SISMIC FROM DISPUTED AREAS IN THE AEGEAN, THEY HAVE ALSO BEEN WILLING TO ASKNOWLEDGE THAT SUCH AN OUTCOME TO THE DEBATE IS UNLIKELY. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES THEY RELUCTANTLY AGREE THAT IT MAY BE NECESSARY FOR GREECE TO ACCEPT SOMETHING LESS, PERHAPS ENDORSEMENT OF GREECE'S INITIATIVE IN THE HAGUE, COUPLED WITH AN APPEAL TO BOTH SIDES TO SUSPEND OPERATIONS WHILE RESUMING DIRECT TALKS. SINCE GREECE IS NOT CURRENTLY CONDUCTING SEISMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE AEGEAN AND DOES NOT HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO DO SO AT PRESENT (THE OCEANOGRAPHIC-HYDROGRAPHIC SURVEY VESSEL NAUTILUS IS NOT, AS FAR AS WE KNOW, EQUIPPED TO DO SEISMIC RESEARCH), THIS OUTCOME COULD CONCEIVABLY BE INTERPRETED BY THE GREEKS AS DIRECTED AT THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT -- AND THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT COULD IGNORE IT UNTIL THE SISMIC COMPLETES ITS OPERATIONS IN MID-SEPTEMBER (REF B).

4. HOWEVER, A RESOLUTION IN THIS SENSE MIGHT BE STRONGLY RESISTED BY THE TURKS. AN ALTERNATIVE, WHICH IN OUR VIEW SHOULD ALSO BE EXPLORED IN THE CORRIDORS IN NEW YORK, WOULD BE FOR THE SECURITY COUNCIL TO ASSERT THAT BOTH GREECE AND TURKEY HAD A RIGHT TO CONDUCT "SCIENTIFIC" RESEARCH IN UNDELINEATED PORTIONS OF THE AEGEAN SHELF, IT BEING ALSO STATED THAT THESE ACTIVITIES HAD NO RPT NO BEARING ON LEGAL CLAIMS OF THE TWO STATES AND THAT THE RESULTS OF SUCH RESEARCH WOULD EITHER BE PUBLISHED OR SHARED.

5. WE CANNOT SAY WHETHER A RESOLUTION OF THIS KIND, CONTAINING AS WELL REFERENCE TO THE HAGUE COURT AND BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS, WOULD FILL THE GREEK GOVERNMENT'S MINIMUM NEEDS (REF. B). FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, THE GREEKS ARE UNWILLING AT THIS STAGE TO TALK IN TERMS OF ANYTHING LESS THAN THEIR MAXIMUM EXPECTATIONS. NEVER-
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THELESS, IT IS OUR JUDGMENT THAT THIS IS THE DIRECTION IN WHICH OUR EFFORTS SHOULD BE DIRECTED BEHIND THE SCENES. UNLESS WE ARE ABLE TO HELP MANUFACTURE SOME SUCH COMPROMISE, SPARING US FROM THE DILEMMA OF HAVING TO TAKE SIDES IN A NO-WIN CONTEST, WE WILL INEVITABLY BE FORCED TO HAVE RECOURSE TO THE KIND OF LOFTY GENERALITIES WHICH BOTH SIDES IN THEIR PRESENT MOOD WILL INTERPRET IN WAYS ADVERSE TO OUR INTERESTS. THE GREEKS INVENTED THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS, AND IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL THIS WEEK IF WE ARE UNABLE TO REWRITE THE MYTH, WE MAY BE CONDEMNED TO RELIVE IT.
KUBISCH

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